

MINISTRY STANDARDS OF THE AUGUSTANA DISTRICT

Adopted at the
Augustana District (LCMC) Annual Convention
April 2011



A District of Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ (LCMC)

Ministry Standards of the Augustana District

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Introduction

The role of a pastor is one created by God for the life and well being of the Body of Christ. Each pastoral setting is shaped by the culture, theology, and style of the people being served, and those expectations are to be expressed by the Letter of Call a congregation or institution extends to a pastoral candidate. The relationship can only be a blessing, however, when the congregation's call affirms a prior call from God. We expect every pastor serving in the Augustana District to have a firm internal belief that he or she is called by God, as well as awareness that this call is affirmed and expressed externally by the call of a congregation. The pastor is called by God to serve vocationally in God's holy Church, and only subsequently and secondarily should the pastor understand his or her employment as a career.

Ephesians 4:11ff says, "The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ." No gift of God ever operates solely by human effort or discretion. It is the Holy Spirit who calls and spiritually equips an individual to serve in the Office of Pastor. Our expectation is that all who present themselves for service as pastors will have a sense of being called by God to this vocation, and will be able to express and verbalize that sense of call.

The Church is directed to "test the spirits" to affirm that call in a candidate. This is normally done in a process spread across educational and mentoring relationships. The Lutheran tradition of an educated pastoral corps has served us well over the centuries, and we look to continue that practice. The Board of Theology and Ministry

administers an endorsement process for pastors entering our district, but final discretion in calling an approved candidate will always rest in the congregation. Congregations need to be able to discern the different kinds of calls that God issues and make choices that will lead to maturity for all who share in faith in Christ.

This document serves as a guide in exercising both the privileges and responsibilities of entering into a called relationship.

*“Who has known the mind of the Lord, so as to instruct him?
But we have the mind of Christ.” (1 Corinthians 2:16)*

The Duties and Responsibilities of the Public Office of Ministry

Our Lord Jesus bequeathed the means through which his Church and all its individual members would be created and sustained in saving faith. These Means of Grace are external and outside the self, and are the Holy Spirit’s tools for “calling, gathering, enlightening, and sanctifying the whole Christian Church on earth” (The Small Catechism). Specifically, the Means of Grace instituted and provided by our Lord are the Word and the two Holy Sacraments (John 14:16, Matthew 28:19, I Corinthians 11:24, 25). The Holy Spirit’s use of these means creates believers, and therefore the Church, “when and where he pleases” (Augsburg Confession, Article 5).

As the Means of Grace define the Church, so also they define the Office of Pastor. While all Christians have the capacity to preach and teach the Word and administer the Sacraments by virtue of Baptism, men and women are called by God through churches to function in the public Office of Pastor. This is done for the sake of good order. Word and Sacrament, therefore, define the function, role, and responsibilities of the pastor. The pastor is authorized (that is, given authority) to serve in the public Office of Pastor by virtue of the Church’s call.

The duties of the public Office of Pastor are as follows:

- a. Preach and teach the Word of God as the sole source and norm of faith and life.
- b. Administer the sacraments according to the Gospel.
- c. Adhere to the witness of the Lutheran Confessions.

- d. Provide pastoral care, pastoral counseling, and private absolution.
- e. Lead public worship.
- f. Equip the saints for lives of Christian devotion, service, and mission.
- g. Provide leadership in the stating and achieving of the congregation's mission.
- h. Participate in continuing education.
- i. Pray regularly for the congregation and its individual members.
- j. Practice a daily devotional life.

PART II: CALLED BY GOD TO LIVE IN THE SPIRIT

“Live in the spirit as God does ... so that God may be glorified in all things through Jesus Christ.” (1 Peter 4:6, 11)

The Pastor as an Example to Others

The pastor, like all Christians, is called to “lead a life worthy of the Gospel” (Philippians 1:27). Because of the public nature of the Office of Pastor, the pastor needs to be keenly aware, and gladly embrace, the reality that both Christians and non-Christians alike look to pastors as examples of exemplary living. Paul writes, “I have become all things to all people, that I might by all means save some. I do it for the sake of the gospel, so that I may share in its blessings” (I Corinthians 9:22b—23). Even though we are set free from the law in the joyous proclamation of the gospel, we “take care that this liberty of [ours] does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak” (I Corinthians 8:9). As with all Christians, a pastor’s identity is not determined by moral or spiritual perfection, but rather by living a life in the grace of Christ crucified. It is therefore a life grounded in and led by the Word of God, with the following practical implications:

1. The Sacrament of Holy Baptism establishes an identity in Christ Jesus and determines an eternal destiny for all believers in Christ. The old self is put to death and a new self is raised so that “we too may walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:4). The pastor’s life should be marked by a cycle of daily repentance and forgiveness established in baptism.
2. As a witness to Christ, the pastor is a conveyor of salvation in Jesus Christ. It is imperative that the pastor:
 - a. Study the scriptures diligently and regularly so that his or her

teaching and preaching is grounded in sound exegesis and in “the word of the cross” (1 Corinthians 1:18). The pastor is expected to be simultaneously both a perpetual student and a skilled teacher of the scriptures. As a normative and faithful witness to the scriptures, the Book of Concord is also to be known and consistently applied to the study and proclamation of scripture. The pastor shall embark on at least three paths of scriptural study: as an individual, in a group (with other pastors and/or laity), and in formal continuing theological education. Additionally, it is encouraged that congregations provide their pastors with extended, sabbatical times of study (Letters of Call should contemplate 3 months structured study for every 5 years of service).

b. Make daily use of the scriptures devotionally, allowing them to speak to the heart and soul of the pastor. Such devotional life shall include a prayer life that is grounded in the Word, and includes petitions for the self, the family, the church that is served, the whole Christian church, and other appropriate petitions.

3. Make regular use of the Sacrament of Holy Communion and of individual confession and forgiveness in the company of his or her own pastor.

4. Shall perform the functions listed in the Letter of Call and any accompanying job description diligently, honestly, and faithfully.

5. Shall resolve conflict in a manner befitting the office, noting our Lord’s command in Matthew 18:15-17.

6. Shall embrace responsibility to family. Pastors, whether married or single, are expected to uphold an understanding of marriage in their public ministry as well as in private life that is biblically informed. Spouse and children, if any, are to be regarded with love, respect, and commitment.

7. Regarding separation, divorce, and remarriage: Marriage under God is between one man and one woman. Pastors are expected to keep their marriage inviolate until death, to cultivate love and respect for their spouse, and to seek marital counseling when it is needed. It is recognized that due to human sin and brokenness, in some cases the marital relationship may have to be dissolved. Should a pastor and spouse seek to divorce, the counsel and guidance of the Chair of the Board of Theology and Ministry (or his/her designee), as well as counsel and guidance from Christian professionals, are to be sought so that both pastoral care and professional assistance are received.

Similarly, should a pastor decide to marry following a divorce, the counsel and guidance of the Chair of the Board of Theology and Ministry is to be sought. In cases of divorce and/or remarriage, the completion and conclusion of careful therapy and intentional pastoral care shall be recorded in the District's personnel files.

8. Regarding sexual conduct: The expectations of sexual conduct for pastors of the Augustana District are grounded in the understanding that human sexuality is a gift from God and that pastors are to live in such a way as to honor this gift. Pastors are expected to reject sexual promiscuity, the manipulation of others for purposes of sexual gratification, and all attempts of sexual seduction and sexual harassment, including taking physical

or emotional advantage of others. Single pastors are expected to live a chaste life. Sexual intimacy is expressed appropriately only within the bonds of marriage, where God provides it as a blessing. The Institution of Marriage, which God established in the orders of creation, is a life-long relationship between one man and one woman.

PART III: CALLED BY GOD TO BE ACCOUNTABLE

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom.” (Colossians 3:16)

We Hold One Another Accountable

In the Kingdom on the Right, the Church is ruled by the Gospel, where sinners are completely justified by grace alone, through faith alone, for the sake of the cross alone. The mark of the Kingdom on the Right is undeserved, unmerited and truly surprising grace dispensed upon sinners of every sort and stripe. But the Church, as an institution in a fallen world and comprised of people who are simultaneously “sinner” as well as “saint”, also resides in the Kingdom on the Left, where it is necessarily ruled by Law. Accountability to one another is therefore not only needed, but desired: “teach and admonish one another in all wisdom” (Colossians 3:16). As is always the case, the Law’s purpose is to protect the neighbor – in this case, the Church, the pastor, and/or individual members.

Both the Augustana District’s Endorsement Process and Ministry Standards seek to uphold mutual accountability of its pastors in three primary areas: Theology, Morality, and Professional Capacity.

1. Theology:

Pastors are expected to embrace, teach, preach, and practice the faith expressed and described in Augustana’s Statement of Faith. This statement is grounded in the Scriptures and in the Lutheran Confessions.

2. Morality:

Pastors are expected to acknowledge and uphold the public nature of the Office of Pastor as described in Part II (above), and to live in accordance with the Ten Commandments and other injunctions of scripture.

3. Professional Capacity:

Pastors are expected to perform the functions of their office diligently and effectively, providing leadership, guidance, reliability, honesty and integrity as they do so. Congregational members of the Augustana District are expected to treat their pastors with the honor and respect due the Office of Pastor.

Regular Review and Constructive Feedback

Especially regarding theological adherence and professional capacity, we recommend that a regular, annual evaluation of the pastor be performed by the church council or its executive committee wherein the pastor's ministry can be applauded for its strengths and an opportunity can be provided to define objectives clearly for the future. Pastors and congregational leaders share a responsibility to provide for the spiritual, emotional, relational, and professional care and performance of the pastor.

Dealing with Problems

When theological, moral or professional violations occur, the body of Christ is harmed, and the integrity of our witness to Christ is diminished. While we mourn such occurrences, we also acknowledge the nature and reality of sin in both our personal lives and in church life, and that it will exist until the day of Jesus Christ. While we expect all to strive to refrain from sin, we also recognize that how we deal with it, confront it, and manage it all go to the heart of our witness.

Our Lord Jesus says, "If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church;

and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector” (Matthew 18:15-17). This method should be employed whenever possible.

In Cases of False Teaching or Professional Inadequacy

It is expected, firstly, that concerns, questions, complaints and accusations in areas of false teaching or professional inadequacy happen directly, one-on-one. In some cases, this may be a neighboring pastor raising the concern directly. In other cases, it may be a church council president or another member of the church, or it may be part of an annual evaluation. Often, these can be resolved to the satisfaction of both the pastor and the concerned individuals with open and honest dialogue between the parties.

If no resolution is obtained, the parties involved should contact the Augustana District’s Chair of the Board of Theology and Ministry (BTM) for consultation, mediation and help as the situation warrants.

BTM will become involved in these matters only as they are reported by a pastoral colleague, by a duly elected officer of the congregation or by public knowledge (such as a website or newsletter).

In Cases of Sexual Misconduct

Charges of sexual misconduct by the pastor raise a multitude of immediate concerns, including that of unequal power. It is expected that the pastor, a pastoral colleague or a duly elected officer of the church call the Chair of BTM for consultation and help immediately upon hearing of allegations. For their own protection, victims of sexual violations are strongly encouraged to bypass people from within the local congregation (including the pastor and officers of the congregation) and call the Chair

of BTM or the Augustana District office directly.

Procedures

When the Chair of BTM is notified regarding theological, moral or professional shortcomings, he or she will follow the processes determined by the Board of Theology and Ministry. Generally, the Chair will share information with the Board, and they will collectively decide upon which actions, if any, to take. In cases of alleged sexual misconduct by the pastor, the Chair of the Board of Theology will follow specific procedures adopted by the District Council, and will proceed in the best possible way to protect the interests and well-being of the alleged victim, the pastor, the congregation, and the Augustana District.

CONCLUSION

The Board of Theology and Ministry

The bylaws of the Augustana District direct that the Board of Theology and Ministry “enforce and maintain the District’s Ministry Standards, and generally provide theological and professional oversight to Augustana’s clergy” (4.01.b). The Augustana District is deeply blessed by pastors who have committed their lives to teaching, proclaiming, and following Christ by answering God’s call to serve as a pastor. Many pastors have taken strong stands for biblical faith that have injured them economically, spiritually, or both. They have now banded together in the Augustana District to preserve and promote the treasure of our heritage: the Gospel itself.

The pastor’s life is at once difficult and rewarding, a challenge and a blessing. The Board of Theology and Ministry exists to uphold and support pastors in their callings by providing pastoral care to them, creating a high quality, annual theological conference to provide ongoing continuing education, building up collegiality among pastors, and keeping us all honest, intellectually and spiritually sharp and accountable one to another – for the sake of the Gospel.

COPY PROVIDED TO:

Delegates to the Augustana District (LCMC) Convention

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